

### **Abstract of the Invention**

A protocol for configuring I/O devices is provided in accordance with the present invention. The protocol includes a first protocol for enabling at least one I/O module to receive network communications, and a second protocol for providing the network 5 communications to the at least one I/O module. The first protocol enables at least one I/O module to enable at least one other I/O module to form an I/O group.